

# CALMING SUBURB TRAFFIC

## Traffic calming – what is it?

Traffic calming is the term applied to systems of restraining vehicle speeds and improving pedestrian usage, and its effectiveness depends partly on making high speeds physically difficult or uncomfortable, and partly on making high speeds simply look difficult or dangerous.

**In urban areas traffic calming cannot sensibly be applied to a single road or stretch of road. It has to be applied to a whole area. This is because protecting only one road merely diverts dangerous traffic on to adjoining roads.**

### Basic requirements

Protecting an area with traffic calming does not mean that every single road has to be given special treatment. It does mean that the area has to be clearly designated; that entry to it has physically to warn a driver there is something significantly different about it even if warning signs have not been seen or have been ignored; and then that if there are any roads where after entry a driver could attain high or dangerous speeds (and a relatively low speed can be dangerous in certain circumstances) special treatments have to be applied to those particular roads.

### Types of treatment

There are two types of physical treatments which have to be

considered and, if adopted, financed. The first group consists of entry treatments which mark the area as a special one; and the second of speed restraining devices of one sort or another which can be used to protect roads within the area. The actual treatments themselves in the two groups have many features in common, depending as they do either on narrowing the path for vehicles; or on altering the line of the road; or on introducing minor obstructions such as rumble strips, speed humps or pedestrian tables (which are like speed humps but longer and flat-topped).

### Department of Transport

The Department of Transport has announced that it favours

the idea of a 20mph speed limit in suitable residential areas, providing they are clearly designated as special areas. If it approves a scheme it will meet up to 50% of the capital cost of applying it. At least one area in London (at Kingston-on-Thames) is setting up such a scheme.

There are understood to be in fact three possible headings under which the Department of Transport might approach a scheme for the Suburb. These are: speed limits below 30mph; environmental improvement; and traffic calming. It is not known how the Department would react to proposals affecting an area as large as the Suburb – the Kingston scheme is a lot smaller. In these circumstances we perhaps have to set out our objectives and outline a scheme which will achieve them; and then face the prospects of detailed three-cornered negotiations with the Borough of Barnet and the Department.

### The objectives

The objectives would be to give the Hampstead Garden Suburb, a special conservation area: (a) improved safety for pedestrians and all road users, including children; (b) enhanced quality of the surroundings in which people live; (c) a style of living and moving about, on foot or otherwise, appropriate for a relatively secluded residential area.

### The scheme

There are sixteen entry roads into the Suburb, and roadside notices at each of them, stating it is a special conservation area, will be needed for a start. The cost of these should not be too high, and British Gas has been asked to consider helping with this cost. Notices by themselves unfortunately have little effect on drivers, and entry treatments will be needed at the main junctions, and perhaps in the end at all of them. This would make entry to the whole area self regulating, and would probably suffice to reduce dangers on many roads. Some roads will nevertheless need special treatments in addition, because they are either wide enough or straight enough to tempt drivers to excessive speeds. The evidence at the moment is that there are at least six of these – Winnington Road, Brim Hill, Temple Fortune Lane, Hampstead Way, Willifield Way, and Meadway. A closer and more detailed examination may suggest others. All of them will need protective traffic calming appropriate to their particular problems.

### Costs

Costs vary a lot from site to site, depending in particular on the need to move drainage gullies. Rough figures provided by the Borough of Barnet are: a traffic island/pedestrian refuge, about £2,000; a speed hump, about £2,000 to £3,000; a speed table/pedestrian table, generally somewhat more than a speed hump; road narrowing systems/kerb extensions/kerb blip, or similar changes to the line of pavement, about £1,000 per blip, and about double that if a gully is affected. At this rate entry treatments might average about £5,000 per entry, or about £80,000 if applied to all sixteen. A small scheme authorised by Barnet at Arnos Grove required a couple of traffic islands and some chicanes (pavement blips) over about three-quarters of a mile of road, and was estimated to cost about £20,000. If only six roads needed traffic calming a further £120,000 would be required.

On these calculations the apparent minimum costs would therefore be about £250,000.



### TRAFFIC ON THE SUBURB

If one took a poll of Suburb residents about what they consider to be the main threat facing the area, speeding traffic would almost certainly emerge as the number one issue. Over the years both the Trust and Residents Association have received numerous letters and petitions demanding action to control speeding. Unfortunately as far as Barnet are concerned there is no problem. Neither pedestrians nor motorists are being killed or seriously injured, and from the statistics, therefore, Suburb roads appear to be comparatively safe. It is unfortunate that the local authority are unwilling to take any action unless people are being killed or injured.

In their Transport Policies and Programme completed in July 1990 Barnet state that:

“the Council will consider the introduction of traffic management schemes where they increase road safety, improve traffic movement or enhance the environment.”

However there are no plans to look at Traffic Management on the Suburb until 1997/98 at the earliest.

### Problem

In common with many other parts of London Suburb roads are used as “rat runs” in order to avoid bottlenecks such as Golders Green and Henleys Corner. The most widely used roads on the south side of the Suburb are Hampstead Way, Meadway, Temple Fortune Lane and Winnington Road, Willifield Way, while on the north side the main problem roads are Brim Hill, Deansway and Ossulton Way. In the rush hour there is a steady stream of cars using these short cuts, and when traffic conditions permit many drivers



### Conclusion

The need to do something about roads and traffic on the Suburb has become increasingly important, and is a major source of complaints to both the Residents Association and the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust. In the past it has proved all but impossible to get anywhere with piecemeal proposals. The time has perhaps arrived when an area-wide scheme has to be given very serious consideration.

### Roads and Traffic Committee

#### 10 April 1991

**PLEASE NOTE:** if you have any comments or observations to make about this article, please write to: The Secretary, Roads and Traffic Committee, 114 Hampstead Way, NW11 7XY. A public meeting where the subject can be discussed is proposed for later this year. It will be sponsored by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust and the Residents Association.

go at an alarming rate. As a result of this additional traffic a number of junctions have become major hazards and there are numerous accidents at crossings such as Meadway/Hampstead Way, Meadway/Wildwood Road and Willifield Way/Asmuns Hill. Another problem is accidents involving parked cars in narrow roads such as Hampstead Way and Willifield Way.

However for the traffic engineers at Barnet damage to cars and hedges, or in the jargon of the Gulf War “collateral damage” is not a major concern. Since the local authority are unwilling to take any action the Trust and Residents Association commissioned their own traffic survey. Rubber strips were laid in Brim Hill, Hampstead Way, Meadway, Ossulton Way, Temple Fortune Lane and Winnington Road by a firm of traffic consultants, and both the volume and speed of traffic was monitored continuously over a two week period. This took place last May and June. The results showed that although many motorists exceed the 30mph limit, neither the number nor the extent of speeding was any greater than on many other roads in London.

In other words, although the data is extremely valuable it is insufficient on its own to change the attitude of the Police and Barnet towards the speeding problem.



Besides safety the other main argument for controlling the speed of traffic is environmental. It is recognised that the Garden Suburb is an Outstanding Conservation Area of national and international importance and in the same way as the local authority maintains tight planning control over houses

they have a similar obligation to preserve the quality of life on Suburb streets. Many local authorities administering conservation areas have introduced traffic calming measures to control speeding traffic. The main advantage of calming is that it does not solve the problem by diverting traffic into other neighbourhoods, but by physically restraining how fast motorists can travel. On the Suburb there are already a number of traffic calming measures in place including the road humps in Oakwood Road



and the roundabouts in Winnington and Wildwood Roads. The humps in particular have been extremely successful in reducing the speed of through traffic.

### Proposed solution

If residents would like more traffic calming measures on the Suburb there will have to be a well organised and concerted campaign. So far residents in individual roads such as Brim Hill, Hampstead Way, Temple Fortune Lane and Willifield Way have organised their own petitions but to no avail. To be successful the whole Suburb will have to become involved. There is no doubt that if we create a sufficient stink the local authority will eventually respond, and this was clearly illustrated by the wheeled bin campaign. To help mobilise Suburb opinion the Trust and Resident's Association are organising a Public Meeting later in the Spring and we hope everyone will attend. In the meantime please continue to lobby the three Suburb Councillors and write letters to the local press demanding that something should be done to protect our Suburb from speeding cars. CK

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DO YOU HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LANDLORD?

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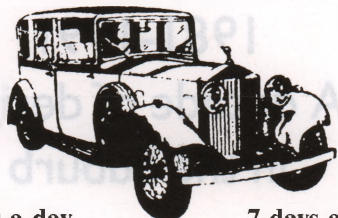
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